Not that it is all alike. Marianne Moore, one admits right away, must be taken for worse. She wedded wit, but after divorces from beauty and sense. Her manners are those of the absurder coteries, her fastidiousness is that of the insufferable highbrows. She wrote some pieces for Alfred Kreymborg's "Others" which made that anthology difficult to take seriously, and in the present volume she quite smothers out an occasional passage of distinction with verbiage like this:

> Those
> various sounds consistently indistinct, like intermingled echoes
> struck from thin glass successively at random—the
> inflection disguised: your hair, the tails of two
> fighting-cocks head to head in stone—like
> sculptured scimitars re-
> peating the curve of your ears in reverse order: your
> eyes, flowers of ice.

There will be other Marianne Moores, perhaps, as there were other Cowleys and Crashaws and Cartwights in the century of Jonson and Donne. They can and will be endured.

The improvement between Miss Millay's first volume of serious poems and her last is remarkable because it has been effected through deliberate exercise of the wits. There never has been any doubt that Miss Millay was a fine poet, but "Renascence" in 1917 had soft spots—a little obscurity, a little sentimentality, a little pose. That "Second April" has virtually none of those things cannot be accounted for merely by the fact that Miss Millay is four years older; she has lived those years brightly and clearly, has done brisk, profitable labor. Her one-act play, "Aria Da Capo," was essentially serious, but it was saved from solemnity by a harlequin-cloak of charming, irresponsible banter which she flung completely around it. Her pamphlet of poems last year, "A Few Figs from Thistles," had sparkle in its passion, even a little smartness. "The Lamp and the Bell," a tragedy, will be best remembered as a delicate riot of gay asides and impeccable metaphors, Elizabethan to the bottom yet not in the least derivative; it bubbles pure poetry. No wonder, then, that "Second April" is intelligent and acceptable; though nothing, of course, can precisely explain its poise, its temper, its sensitive music, and its general justness of feeling. In it sings the voice of a Cavalier for the moment subdued:

> My heart is what it was before,
> A house where people come and go;
> But it is winter with your love,
> The sashes are beset with snow.
>
> I light the lamp and lay the cloth,
> I blow the coals to blaze again;
> But it is winter with your love,
> The frost is thick upon the pane.
>
> I know a winter when it comes:
> The leaves are listless on the boughs;
> I watched your love a little while,
> And brought my plants into the house.
>
> I water them and turn them south,
> I snap the dead brown from the stem;
> But it is winter with your love——
> I only tend and water them.
>
> There was a time I stood and watched
> The small, ill-natured sparrows' fray;
> I loved the beggar that I fed,
> I cared for what he had to say.
>
> I stood and watched him out of sight;
> Today I reach around the door
> And set a bowl upon the step;
> My heart is what it was before.
>
> But it is winter with your love;
> I scatter crumbs upon the sill,
> And close the window—and the birds
> May take or leave them, as they will.

Anna Wickham's book is a highly valuable document both on poetry and on woman. It is the work of an inspired metaphysician, one of England's most honest and inviting minds today, a very contemporary John Donne absorbed to the soul in what she rebelliously, painfully believes and sees. She invents her own curiously uneven, potent rhythms; she rejects no pungent metaphor because it stinks or stings; when she likes she rhymes very cunningly, or misrhymes, or rhymes not at all:

> Rhymed verse is a wide net
> Through which many subtleties escape.
> Nor would I take it to capture a strong thing,
> Such as a whale.

Her demon is unrest; her muses instead of singing to her whip her to intellectual appetite and artistic execution. She is the growing, aching mind of woman asking for hunger that she may think and peace that she may create. She gives herself in love, she is willing to kiss until she is blind; but

> There is the sexless part of me that is my mind.

She would be lonely occasionally, and fast

> In still, kind, perfect night.

Man in the long run she would have more frank—not "sane and solemn," "merciless as a beast," chaste, decorous, possessive, but openly and freely enjoying her as she openly and freely enjoys him. The furtive knight, the slothful husband in the dark, she would make over sometimes into the noon-day lover with the kindness and courtesy that human beings are so proud to command:

> Kiss me sometimes in the light.
> Women have body's pain of body's love.
> Let me have flowers sometimes, and always joy.
> And sometimes let me take your hand and kiss it honestly.

The appeal of such a book is great because it is both passionate and ascetic, and because its protests are intense without being shrill. Its author's voice is low, an excellent thing in prophetesses. Thinking will soonest save her, and she perpetually thinks.

> My love is male and proper-man
> And what he'd have he'd get by chase,
> So I must cheat as women can
> And keep my love from off my face.
> 'Tis folly to my dawning, thrifty thought
> That I must run, who in the end am caught.

Who else would have thought of "thrifty"? Only a few books of recent poetry are so continuously interesting as Anna Wickham's, and scarcely any is so civilizing.

MARK VAN DOREN

Political Metaphysic

The Foundations of Sovereignty and Other Essays. By Harold J. Laski. Harcourt, Brace and Company. $3.50.

MR. LASKI has brought together eight essays written on divers occasions and has prefaced them by a new study which gives the title to the volume. Four of the papers are legal in character. These deal with the responsibility of the state, the personality of associations, the early history of the corporation in England, and the doctrine of vicarious liability. One of the studies is an excursion into administrative law, an analysis of public work and geographical districts. The remainder treat of politics in terms of philosophy. A common thesis unites them all: the unified and sovereign state is morally inadequate and administratively inefficient, and for this political monster we must substitute a pluralistic state which offers co-

ordination for hierarchical structure. A common purpose runs through the most technical pages. It is a desire to help fix the new social philosophy on firmer historical foundations.

It goes without saying that the political philosophers will welcome Mr. Laski's book. Students of law who know and love their Pollock and Maitland will fairly revel in his illuminating inquiry into the early history of the corporation. It is carefully documented. It is full of brilliant suggestions and it is written in a playful style that recalls Maitland himself. One may be pardoned the opinion that Mr. Laski is at his best when he is dealing with the concrete stuff of the law. In political philosophy he is always making trouble for the artists in logomachy, and in fact he takes them a bit too seriously. He seems to have read everything, for his allusions fairly make one's head swim; he can make Thomas Aquinas and Graham Wallas bring grist to his mill with a facility that is positively astounding. Indeed, it takes a person with a great deal more penetration than the present reviewer to see some of the relations in political metaphysic which Mr. Laski announces as discovered and explored.

Still, anyone who quarrels with Mr. Laski must quarrel with the whole army of philosophers from Locke to Spencer. Take for example the essay on the foundations of sovereignty. It is a study of what men have thought about the state. The data are the writings of Dante, Ockham, Marsiglio, Bodin, Rousseau, and all the loquacious schoolmen who have been engaged in defending something that they seldom if ever mentioned. Mr. Laski is not deceived by their persistent abuse of "the language habit." He knows what it is about, for he says on page 29: "What the orthodox theory of sovereignty has done is to coerce them [the members of the state] into an unity, and thereby to place itself at the disposal of the social group which, at any given historic moment, happens to dominate the life of the state." Again he remarks that "the control of political power in the modern state by a small group of property-owners must mean at the bottom that the motives to effort upon which reliance is based will be ineffective so soon as the majority of men see through the façade by which they are screened." And still again he says: "The political philosopher is concerned with the discovery of motives, the measure of wills, the balance of interests. . . . He will in fact be driven to the perception that, politically, there is no such thing as sovereignty at all." Such reflections scattered through the book show clearly that Mr. Laski has been behind the scenes.

Then why should he deal so extensively and kindly with the political philosophers who either have not known what it was all about or for very good reasons have not seen fit to mention it? Mr. Laski is fully aware of the fact that Aristotle did not spend much time with the philosophers except to refute them, that he utterly ignored the metaphysic of Athenian law, and that he went straight to the data of actual politics. If Mr. Laski would follow his own light, which is deep-penetrating, and come to grips with the main issue, he could blow the political dust heaps of Oxford and Cambridge sky-high. Many of us hope that he will take authorities less seriously and the stuff of politics more seriously.

CHARLES A. BEARD

Artists and Business Men

Shallow Soil. By Knut Hamsun. Translated from the Norwegian by Carl Christian Hyllested. Alfred A. Knopf. $2.50.

"SHALLOW SOIL" is not one of Hamsun's great books. It does not rank with the painfully subjective "Hunger" or with that glorious epic of the lowly earth "Growth of the Soil." But as a study of life in Christiania during the early nineties, and as illustrative of tendencies and powers which have come to fruition in Hamsun's later works, it is of great interest. It is a satiric challenge to the devotees of a shallow culture and a specious gentility, who consider themselves immensely superior to mere workers and men of business. On its negative side the book is successful. The representatives of "culture," the writers and artists, are reduced to trivial proportions. But as the minikin Irgens and Ojen, Paulsberg the novelist, and the painter Milde sink from view, the practical men, Tidemand and Henriksen, somehow fail to rise. The positive intent of the book is not realized. We feel that Hamsun is packing his jury for "the man who does things."

The commonplace "culture" which lies decaying in Norwegian streets, even as it did in Nietszche's Germany, fares badly in "Shallow Soil." These artists, these cultured people, may be very fine and all that, says Hamsun in effect, but they may also have mean aspirations, smugness, stupidity, the shallowness that protects them from any real emotional experience coupled with an infinite capacity for assuming sentimental attitudes; while your business man, your ordinary, vulgar, workaday person, may have his "absurd loves, unbounded desires, wild aspirations for a brilliant and noble life, deceptions, sorrows." "But, so help me, there is a difference between poets and peasants, I should think!" says Milde, the artist, to the enigmatic vagabond, Coldevin, Hamsun's mouthpiece. It is evident that Coldevin does not think there is a difference; that Hamsun himself does not think so.

The plot of "Shallow Soil" is carefully knit. The double "turning" which involves the redemption of Hanka, the ruin of Aagot, and the suicide of Henriksen is convincingly prepared. The style is fresh and the story firm. Here and there we get flashes of Hamsun's fiendish knowledge of neurotic types. The characters are brilliant and consistent—Aagot with her weakness and her girlish charm; Hanka, returning shyly to her husband after defeats in Bohemia; Irgens, vain, selfish, with the soul of a poetic wasp; Coldevin, the shabby tutor, the "phenomenon" who cares more for honest worth than for silk-lined culture.

As a picture of Christiania's Bohemia in the nineties, the book has been called journalistic by Norwegian critics. But the charge of journalism is always difficult to sustain against any work having pretensions to artistic form. Against Hamsun it is particularly difficult. Whether or not a work is journalistic is a matter which usually has to be tried out in the "long run" of time. The life satirized in "Shallow Soil" is a good deal like that of our own, or any other, Bohemia. Who that knows poets has not met Ojen, prepared to recite his verses on the slightest provocation; Irgens and Milde, the knowing novelist Paulsberg, and the busy journalist Gregersen, with their little biting jealousies and their accommodating little back-scratchings? And then there is the parliamentary "situation," uppermost as a topic of conversation with the artistic clique. No specific situation is mentioned, though of course it is part of the wrangles between Norway and Sweden. The "situation" is said to look bright, and fine phrases are bandied about; then it becomes dubious, then hopeless. The leaders are firm, they begin to show signs of vacillation, they turn traitors altogether. Newspaper articles are written showing what is to be done. Fine words, fine gestures, eloquent attitudes! And in the end "it comes to this, that Parliament had been dissolved without having said the deciding word, without having said anything, in fact." This comes perilously near the truth about the actions of political bodies, anywhere on earth. If "Shallow Soil" is journalism, it is very close to that universal journalism which is art.

HOLGER CAHILL

Books in Brief

THE story in Percy MacKaye's new poem, "Dogtown Common" (Macmillan), was neither to be saved nor slain by meter, made nor ruined by rhyme. It was old New England witchcraft business, and poet-proof; so it lives through Mr. MacKaye. But if ever a tale was pounced upon, dragged by the hair, stood up weeping, caressed and cuffed and tumbled